

## History goes to the movies

### 1 VOCABULARY history and warfare

a Which of the films below do you consider to be historical films? Why (not)?

*Apocalypse Now*   *Che Part 1 and Part 2*   *Dances With Wolves*   *Gladiator*   *Schindler's List*  
*The Queen*   *The Reader*   *Shakespeare in Love*   *Titanic*   *The Untouchables*

b Read the descriptions of three famous scenes from films. Complete each text with words from the list.

## The scenes you'll never forget

– our film critics choose their favourite moments.



1 'They will never take our freedom!'

### Braveheart Mel Gibson, 1995

arrows outnumbered overthrow rebel troops victorious

The film is set in 13th-century Scotland. Mel Gibson plays the Scottish <sup>1</sup>*rebel* William Wallace, who tries to <sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ the English who ruled Scotland at that time. One of the most memorable scenes is the Battle of Stirling, when Wallace's army, hopelessly <sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, wait in an open field for the English to attack. The English fire thousands of <sup>4</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ into the air but the Scots defend themselves with shields. Then the English knights on horseback charge at full speed, but at the last moment the Scottish <sup>5</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ raise their spears and the English knights are thrown from their horses and slaughtered. A fierce battle then takes place and Wallace's army are <sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. The scene is not a model of historical accuracy, but with its spectacular special effects and stunts, it's tremendous fun. 'They may take our lives, but they will never take our freedom!'



2 'As God is my witness...'

### Gone with the Wind Victor Fleming, 1939

besieged Civil War looted side

*Gone with the Wind* is based on the best-selling book by Margaret Mitchell. It tells the story of a manipulative woman, Scarlett O'Hara (played by Vivien Leigh), and an unscrupulous man, Rhett Butler (Clark Gable), who carry on a turbulent love affair in the American South during the <sup>1</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. The Confederates, the <sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ Scarlett's family supports, are losing, and Scarlett is living in Atlanta, which is <sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ by the Union army. She escapes, and goes home only to find her mother dead, her father disoriented, and her family home <sup>4</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. She asks for food and is told the soldiers have taken everything. In this dramatic scene, Scarlett, starving and desperate, suddenly sees a turnip in the ground. She falls on it, pulls it from the ground and eats it. She is nearly sick, then rises from the ground, looks round the ruined land and vows 'As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again'.

c 4.1 Listen and check.

d p.163 Vocabulary Bank History and warfare.

e With a partner, say what the difference is between...

- an arrow and a spear
- survivors and refugees
- a coup and a revolution
- a ceasefire and a treaty
- withdraw and retreat
- defeat and overthrow

f Re-read the texts and try to memorize the information. Then in groups of three, cover the texts and take turns to describe what happens in each of the scenes.



## Spartacus Stanley Kubrick, 1960

capture casualties defeat forces rebellion weapons

This epic film tells the story of the rise and fall of a slave in the Roman Empire. Spartacus (Kirk Douglas) is trained as a gladiator, but he rebels against his Roman owner and escapes. He forms an army of slaves and becomes their leader. Although they have fewer <sup>1</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ and are less well organized, they win several victories against the Roman <sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ which are sent to put down the <sup>3</sup>\_\_\_\_\_. But a final climactic battle just outside Rome results in the total <sup>4</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ of the rebel army, with heavy <sup>5</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ on both sides, and the <sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ of many of the survivors, including Spartacus. Crassus (Laurence Olivier), the Roman general, promises the captives that they will not be punished if they will identify Spartacus. In this powerful scene, one by one, each surviving soldier stands and shouts out 'I'm Spartacus!' Crassus finally condemns them all to be executed in a mass crucifixion along the Appian Way.

## 2 PRONUNCIATION stress in word families

It is often useful to learn words in 'families', e.g. *to rebel, a rebel, rebellion*, etc. However, you should check whether the stressed syllable changes within the 'family'.

a Complete the chart.

noun	person	adjective	verb
capture	/ captor	captive	
		civil / civilized	
execution			
history	historian	/ historic	
looting	looter		
rebellion		rebellious	
siege			
		surviving	
			withdraw
		victorious	

b 4.2 Underline the stressed syllable in all the words. Listen and check. Then test a partner on the words in the chart.

## 3 SPEAKING & WRITING

In this dramatic scene, Scarlett, starving and desperate, suddenly sees a turnip in the ground. She falls on it, pulls it from the ground and eats it.

We normally use the present simple ('the dramatic present') when we describe a scene from a film, or the plot.

- Work in groups of three or four. Each think of a film you really enjoyed that was set in a historical period or based on a real event. Make notes under the following headings to help you to talk about it.
  - Where and when is the film set?
  - Who are the main characters and who are they played by?
  - What is it about?
  - What is the most memorable scene?
  - What makes it so powerful / moving / dramatic, etc.?
- Describe the film and the scene to others in the group, and see if they can name the title of the film.
- Now write a paragraph describing the film and the scene using the three texts in 1b as models.

## 4 READING

- a How important do you think it is that a historical film should get all the facts right? Why?
- b Quickly read part of the preface of the book *History Goes to the Movies* by US author Joseph Roquemore. What kind of book is it?
  - a It compares historical films to what really happened.
  - b It is a guide to the best ever historical films.
  - c It analyses the effect historical films have on young people.

# History Goes to the Movies

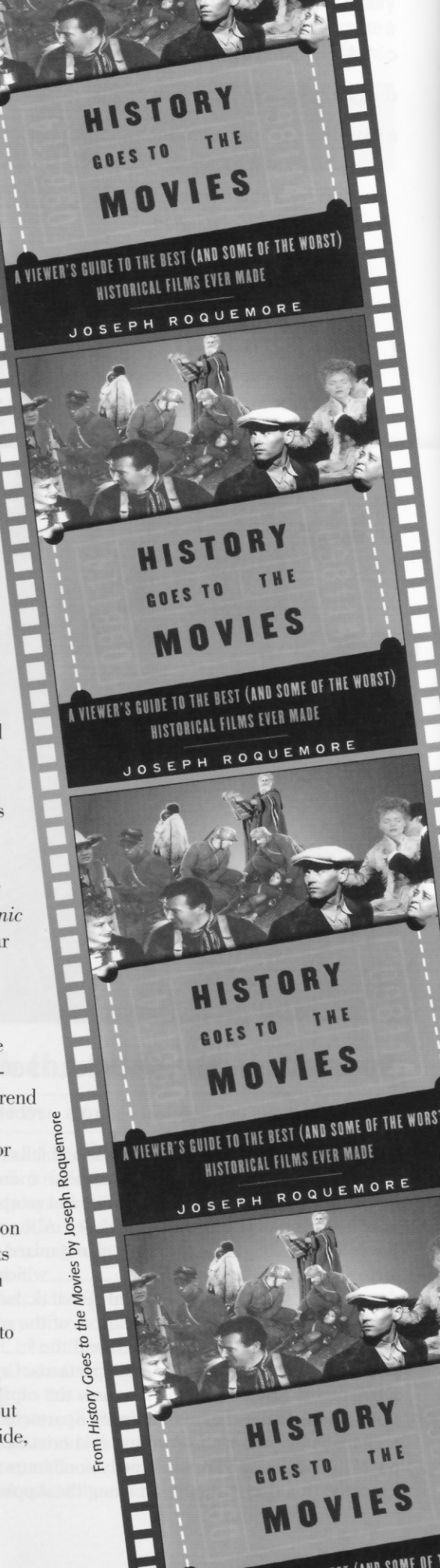
When asked in 1993 to comment on accusations that the movie *In the Name of the Father* grossly distorts contemporary British and Irish history, female lead Emma Thompson famously responded 'I don't give a damn'. Ever since the premiere in 1915 of *The Birth of a Nation*, film-makers have rewritten history to create top-dollar entertainment. The films are very persuasive: well-made movies hold your interest continuously, riveting your attention on 'what happens next', and pulling you forward with no time to reflect on individual scenes until the final credits roll. The result: you don't remember much about a film after watching it for the first time. Very few people can recall even half the plot in reasonable sequence, and still fewer can remember facial expressions or voice intonation associated with specific dialogue sequences (including politically and morally loaded conversations). For this reason, films have extraordinary power – unmatched by any other medium – to leave you with a strong sense of what is right and what is wrong, who is bad and who is good, even though critical details presented in the movies may be biased or false.

Well, so what? They're just movies. In fact they're not just movies. Millions of Americans are fanatical history lovers, and they pack theaters every time new films on historical figures or events come to town. *Saving Private Ryan* and *Titanic* raked in viewers and cash for months. One of the History Channel's most popular programs, *Movies in Time*, is shown twice daily. Many high school teachers screen movies in the classroom. Clearly countless Americans get most of their history from television and the big screen.

Some of the industry's finest historical and period films premiered during the past decades. But the 1960s also triggered a flurry of politically charged history-based movies full of factual distortions and, occasionally, outright lies. Today the trend continues on a larger scale: many films released in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century reflect blatant disdain, at least as intense as Ms Thompson's, for solid reliable history.

*History Goes to the Movies* is a source of information and, it is hoped, entertainment for everyone interested in the actual history behind a wide selection of movies grouped into twelve sections – 11 covering historical periods and events and a twelfth containing biographies and period films. Each film review includes an essay on the history covered in one or more movies, and a brief plot summary. Star ratings (five stars: don't miss it) reflect each movie's historical accuracy and – to a far lesser degree – its power to amuse.

Obviously expecting textbook accuracy from films would be ridiculous – and producers have delivered a remarkable number of historically faithful movies. But some of them get too much of their history wrong. *History Goes to the Movies* is a guide, however imperfect, for readers and viewers aiming to get it right.



From *History Goes to the Movies* by Joseph Roquemore



- c Now read the text again carefully and choose a, b, or c. Compare with a partner and explain why you think the answer you have chosen is right.

- 1 Emma Thompson said that \_\_\_\_ that the film *In the Name of the Father* was historically inaccurate.
  - a she was upset
  - b she didn't care
  - c she wasn't aware
- 2 When people see a film they tend to remember \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a quite a lot of what people said
  - b what happened in chronological order
  - c who the heroes and villains were
- 3 According to the author, what most Americans know about history comes from \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a what they learned at high school
  - b documentaries on the History Channel
  - c films they have seen in the cinema and on TV
- 4 Films made in recent years have been historically inaccurate because film makers \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a don't check the facts
  - b are not concerned about historical accuracy
  - c want to make politically correct films
- 5 The star system Joseph Roquemore uses refers \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a equally to historical accuracy and entertainment value
  - b more to entertainment value than historical accuracy
  - c more to historical accuracy than entertainment value

## LEXIS IN CONTEXT

- d Look at the highlighted words and expressions related to cinema. With a partner say what they mean. Check any you're not sure of in a dictionary.
- e Complete the sentences with a word or expression from d.
- 1 The latest James Bond movie is expected to be \_\_\_\_\_ early next summer.
  - 2 After years as a respected theatre actress, she has finally been given her chance to appear on the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 3 I can't stand it when people get up and leave the cinema as soon as the film ends when I'm trying to watch the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 4 The special effects were fantastic but the \_\_\_\_\_ was a bit implausible.
  - 5 Many of the biggest names were there at last night's \_\_\_\_\_.

## 5 LISTENING & SPEAKING

- a Two of the films mentioned in *History Goes to the Movies* are *Titanic* and *Braveheart*. Have you seen either of them? How historically accurate did you think they were?
- b **4.3** Listen to a film critic talking about them. How many stars did the author Joseph Roquemore give the films? Does the film critic agree?
- c Listen again and make notes about what was inaccurate about the two films. Compare your notes with a partner. How serious do you think the inaccuracies were?

***Titanic*** 1997 Director James Cameron  
Inaccuracies:

***Braveheart*** 1995 Director Mel Gibson  
Inaccuracies:

- d Can you think of any films you have seen which you think were very inaccurate? Did this spoil your enjoyment of the film?

## 6 GRAMMAR

### discourse markers (2): adverbs and adverbial expressions

- a **4.4** Listen to some extracts from what the film critic said and complete the phrases below with one to three words. What do they tell you about what the speaker is going to say next?
  - 1 \_\_\_\_\_, these characters and their story are fictitious...
  - 2 \_\_\_\_\_, I think his assessment is about right.
  - 3 William Wallace is portrayed as a kind of poor primitive tribesman living in a village. \_\_\_\_\_, he was the son of a rich landowner.
  - 4 \_\_\_\_\_, the Scots stopped wearing woad hundreds of years earlier.
  - 5 \_\_\_\_\_, the reason why the Scots won the battle is because the English soldiers got trapped on the narrow bridge.
- b **p.145 Grammar Bank 4A.** Read the rules and do the exercises.
- c **Communication** *Guess the sentence A p.117 B p.119.*

<p><b>A</b> I really like your shirt. Hasn't Harry got one just like it?</p> <p><b>B</b> <b>Talking of</b> Harry, did he get the job he applied for?</p>	To change the direction of a conversation, but making a link with what has just been said.
<p>So let's meet at five o'clock then. <b>By the way</b> / <b>Incidentally</b>, could you possibly lend me some money until the weekend?</p>	To introduce something you have just thought of, or to change the subject completely.
<p><b>A</b> Did you see the match last night?</p> <p><b>B</b> No, I didn't. <b>Actually</b> / <b>In fact</b> / <b>As a matter of fact</b> I don't really like football.</p>	To introduce additional surprising or unexpected information.
<p>We didn't go away at the weekend because I had too much work. <b>In any case</b> / <b>Anyway</b> the weather was awful, so we didn't miss anything.</p>	To introduce the idea that what you said before is less important than what you are going to say. To return to the main topic after a digression.
<p>Yes, it was a bad accident. <b>At least</b> nobody was killed, though. Tom's coming to the meeting, or <b>at least</b> he said he was.</p>	To introduce a positive point after some negative information. To make what you have just said less definite.
<p><b>As I was saying</b>, if Mark gets the job we'll have to reorganize the department.</p>	To return to a previous subject, often after you have been interrupted.
<p><b>On the whole</b>, I think that women make better journalists than men.</p>	To generalize.
<p>I like both flats, but <b>all in all</b>, I think I prefer the one next to the cathedral.</p>	To say that you are taking everything into consideration.
<p>I think we should buy them. <b>After all</b>, we'll never find them anywhere cheaper than this.</p>	To introduce a strong argument that the other person may not have taken into consideration.
<p>I don't think I'll come to Nick's party. It will finish very late. <b>Besides</b>, I won't know many people there.</p>	To add additional information or arguments.
<p><b>Basically</b>, my job involves computer skills and people skills.</p>	To introduce the most important or fundamental point.
<p><b>Obviously</b> you can't get a real idea of life in Japan unless you can speak the language.</p>	To introduce a fact that is very clear to see or understand.
<p>She's very selfish. <b>I mean</b>, she never thinks about other people at all.</p>	To make things clearer or give more details.
<p>A lot of people booed, and some people even left early. <b>In other words</b>, it was a complete disaster.</p>	To say something again in another way.
<p>Please try not to make a mess when you make the cake. <b>Otherwise</b> I'm going to have to clean the kitchen again.</p>	To say what the result would be if something did not happen or if the situation were different.
<p>That's all you need to know about the travel arrangements. <b>As far as</b> accommodation is concerned, <b>As regards</b> / <b>Regarding</b> accommodation, the options are living with a family or living in a hall of residence.</p>	To introduce a new topic or to announce a change of subject.
<p>The government are going to help first-time buyers. <b>That is to say</b>, they are going to make mortgages more easily available.</p>	To introduce an explanation or clarification of a point you have just made.
<p><b>On (the) one hand</b>, more young people today carry knives. <b>On (the) other hand</b>, the total number of violent crimes has dropped.</p>	To balance contrasting facts or points. <i>On the other hand</i> is also used alone to introduce a contrasting fact or point.

- a Circle the appropriate discourse markers in the dialogue.

**A** What a good film! I really enjoyed it. Didn't you?

**B** (Actually) / *Incidentally*, I didn't like it very much.

**A** Why not?

**B** <sup>1</sup>*Basically* / *After all* I thought it was incredibly far-fetched. I couldn't believe in the characters at all, and the plot was totally implausible.

**A** I wouldn't call it far-fetched. <sup>2</sup>*At least* / *In any case* it wasn't supposed to be a true story.

**B** I know, but it was set in a very specific historical period.

<sup>3</sup>*Otherwise* / *Obviously* you can't expect the dialogue to be totally authentic, <sup>4</sup>*I mean* / *on the other hand* nobody knows exactly how people spoke in the 17th century, but <sup>5</sup>*at least* / *anyway* the period details should be right. There was a clock in the king's palace and they didn't have clocks until the eighteenth century! <sup>6</sup>*All in all* / *That is to say* I thought it was a pretty awful film.

**A** We'll have to agree to disagree then. <sup>7</sup>*By the way* / *As a matter of fact*, do you know what time the last train leaves? I don't want to miss it. <sup>8</sup>*Otherwise* / *In any case* I'll have to get a taxi home.

**B** 11.40. Don't worry, we've got plenty of time. <sup>9</sup>*In fact* / *Besides*, I think we've even got time to have something to eat. Do you fancy a quick pizza? There's a good Italian restaurant just round the corner.

**A** Yes, let's go. <sup>10</sup>*As I was saying* / *Talking of* Italian food I made a wonderful risotto with mushrooms last night...

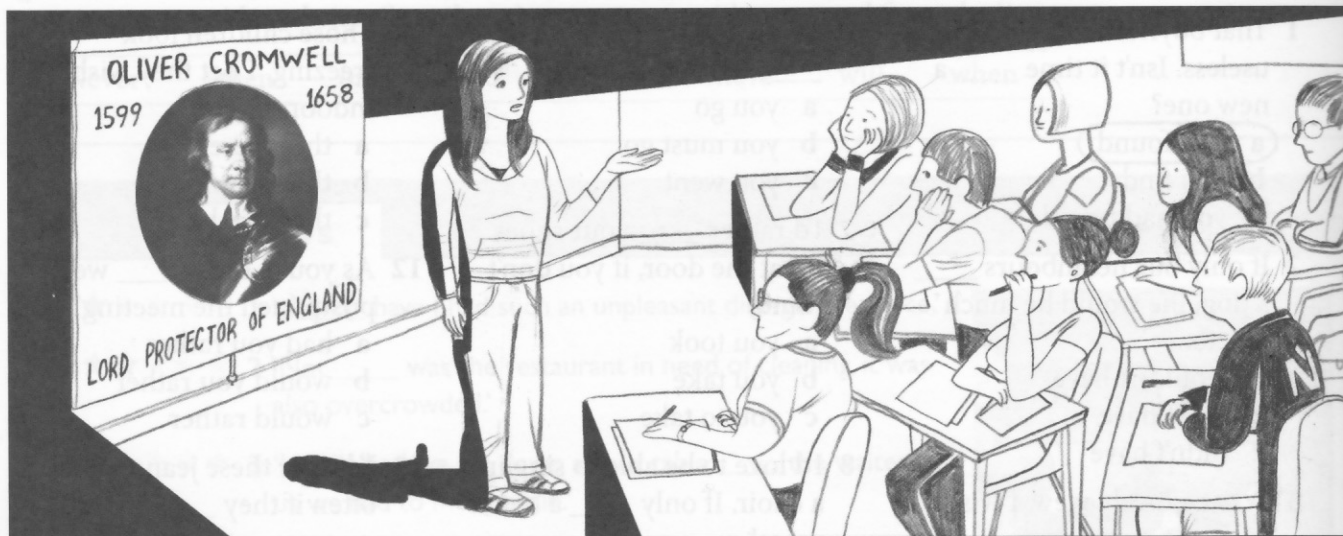
- b Complete the sentences with appropriate discourse markers. Sometimes more than one answer may be possible.

The food was delicious and the service was excellent. All in all the meal was a great success.

- Jason is an excellent teacher, although \_\_\_\_\_ I think female teachers are usually better with four- and five-year-olds.
- A** Did you buy the shoes in the end?  
**B** No, they were too expensive. And \_\_\_\_\_ I decided that I didn't really like them that much.
- I really think you ought to apply for the post of head of department. \_\_\_\_\_ you've got nothing to lose, and you might just get it, who knows?
- A** I've just read a brilliant book that Simon lent me.  
**B** \_\_\_\_\_ Simon, did you know he's moving to New York?
- A** How was your day?  
**B** Fine. I finished work a bit earlier than usual. \_\_\_\_\_, did you remember to get a birthday present for your mum?
- It was a very grey, overcast day, but \_\_\_\_\_ it didn't rain.
- A** Do your wife's parents live near you then?  
**B** \_\_\_\_\_, they live in the flat below us. *It's not ideal* but it does have some advantages.
- They've employed me as a kind of troubleshooter – \_\_\_\_\_ somebody who sorts out problems whenever they occur.
- \_\_\_\_\_ salary \_\_\_\_\_, you will be paid on the 30th or 31st of each month, with a bonus in December and in July.
- You'd better hurry up with your homework. \_\_\_\_\_ you won't be able to watch TV tonight.
- I'm not sure what the best solution is. \_\_\_\_\_ buying our own place would mean not having to waste money paying rent, but \_\_\_\_\_ I'm not sure we can really afford a mortgage.

**Consolidation**

Complete the presentation with the discourse markers from the list.



~~in fact~~    that is to say    by the way    obviously    in other words  
to sum up    anyway    on the one hand    basically    besides

Hi, everyone. The historical figure I've chosen for my mini-presentation is Oliver Cromwell. You may not have heard of him before, but <sup>1</sup> in fact he was one of the most influential figures in the history of the British Isles. <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, I don't have time to give you all the details about his life in only five minutes, but let's start with some dates...

...Cromwell did not accept the absolute power of the King. <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, he strongly believed that his country should be governed not only by the King, but also by Parliament. After joining the army as a soldier, he eventually became a commander and led his troops in the Civil War which ended in the defeat and execution of the King. <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ this, Cromwell also led military campaigns in Ireland and Scotland. He was later named as Lord Protector of England, or, <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, the absolute leader of the country...

...<sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, you might be interested in finding out more about the English Civil War. It was a very violent and unstable period in the country's development, during which thousands of people were wounded or killed. <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, to get back to the main subject of my presentation, Cromwell...

...<sup>8</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, there are two contrasting opinions about Oliver Cromwell. <sup>9</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, some people believe that he was a great hero who liberated his country by overthrowing the King. On the other hand, he is regarded by many as a violent dictator whose actions led to the oppression and death of many people...

...<sup>10</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, I believe that Oliver Cromwell was an extremely important figure in British history, whatever you think about him. Thank you for listening. Does anyone have any questions? I'm not the world's greatest expert on British history, but I'm happy to try to answer...

Give a five-minute mini-presentation to the class about a famous historical figure who interests you. If you need to find information, try searching on the Internet in English. When you give your mini-presentation, use the discourse markers from the exercise above.

**Activation**